held before 17th of October when its term expires. Now, may I know from the Home Minister why he is playing hide and seek with this House as well as the nation? You are not going to hold elections to Lok Sabha even in the month of May. Sir, I say this on the basis of information about a discussion which is scheduled to be held in the meeting of the Consultative Committee of the Ministry of Finance, on 11th of March this year, where the agenda is: "General Budget 1996-97". You are going to discuss the Budget and invite suggestions from the hon. Members of the Consultative Committee of the Ministry of Finance on 11th of March regarding the regular Budget for 1996-97. That means, this Government intends to bring a regular Budget. That means, the Government does not want to hold elections before July for which a Vote on Account is to be passed. You want to go ahead, August, September or October. What is this intention? Why don't you make it clear? Is it not a fact that you are going to hold a meeting on 11th of March? We have received the agenda papers. Members have received the agenda papers. Dr. Ashok Mitra told me just now; we have signed letter to the Finance Minister, some of us who are members of this Committee, saying that it is highly improper for the Government to hold discussions on the General Budget in March when they are going to hold elections before the Vote on Account period is over.

SHRI S.B. CHAVAN: Sir, it is rather difficult for me ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Your intentions are not *bona fide*. You are not going to hold the Lok Sabha polls in May even.

SHRI S.B. CHAVAN: It is rather difficult for me to say as to what transpires there or what kind of a notice was issued by the Finance Ministry.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: I say, this is the notice.

SHRI S.B. CHAVAN: All right. Even presuming ...*(Interruptions)*... Even presuming that such kind of notice has been given by the Finance Ministry, asking for your opinion on the Budget which, in fact, is going to be presented ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Mr. Chairman, the Government is responsible for that. ...*(Interruptions)*... Whichever Ministry has issued the notice, that is also his responsibility.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please sit down.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Let him explain.

SHRI S.B. CHAVAN: If the Budget is going to be presented in July, 1996, and if they have asked for your opinion, it might be that they are so confident that this Government is going to continue and they are asking for your suggestions...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Sir, this is very unfair. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let us go to Q. No. 82. ...*(Interruptions)*... I have gone to the next question. ...*(Interruptions)*... Q. No. 82.

Agencies Hiring Accommodation for Hajis

*82. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the agencies which hire accommodation for Indian Hajis at Mecca and Madina in Saudi Arabia;

(b) the procedure laid down for hiring the accommodation by Government;

(c) whether the Haj Committee has appointed any agent for hiring accommodation, during this year;

(d) whether it has come to the notice of Government that Press reports have appeared stating that nearly Rs. 100 crores are involved in the deal and lot of corruption has been alleged in the deal; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Accommodation for Indian Haj pilgrims in Saudi Arabia is hired by the Consulate General of India, Jeddah, with the good offices of the Moassassa of South Asian countrires constituted by the Government of Saudi Arabia. The procedure followed is that the Building Renting Delegation of the Central Haj Committee holds discussions with the Saudi

Minister of Haj and the Chairman of the Moassassa of South Asian countries to decide on the broad parameters under which the accommodation will be hired including the number of units to be hired, distance from the Haram Sharief and the rental to be charged. Subsequently, the Building Selection Team, consisting of representative of State Haj Committees, goes to Saudi Arabia to assist the CGI, Jaddah, in the selection of buildings. Buildings are selected with the help of Moallims and long-lease holders approved by the Government of Saudi Arabia and the rental agreements are signed with the landlords/long-lease holders in the presence of the Moassassa.

(c) No agent has been appointed by the Central Haj Committee for hiring accommodation.

(d) and (e) While some press reports have appeared, no specific case has come to notice.

SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Sir, for parts (d) and (e) of my question the hon. Minister has said, "While some press reports have appeared, no specific case has come to notice." Sir, the newspapers in Saudi Arabia are full of reports on the management of the Haj affairs by the Consulate and the Central Haj Committee. I have come to know last week that there were about seven Press reports appearing in the Saudi Arabia newspapers about the Chairman of the Central Haj Committee making allegations against the Consulate staff. The Consulate staff is unable to answer. I will read out a statement : 'A top Indian leader had accused the former Consulate—General and the Haj Consul of blackmailing the Indian Government and had demanded an inquiry into the lackadaisical manner in which the Haj affairs were conducted by them. I am going to press for an inquiry into their conduct and call for stern action when they are found guilty'. Sir, this is the statement made by the Chairman, Central Haj Committee in Saudi Arabia whereas the Indian Ambassador at Riyadh has complimented the performance of those officials in charge of Haj Affairs! The Indian community as well as the Haj pilgrims are worried about the mud-slinging and washing of dirty linen by the Chairman of the Haj Committee outside the country. I would like to know from the hon. Minister how the Chairman of the Central Haj Committee can charge and Indian Mission official in an interview in a foreign country, bringing down the image of the country, bringing down the morale of the Indian officials. What action does the Government propose to take against the Chairman of the Haj Committee for bringing down the image of the country?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, you will appreciate that it is not possible for me to verify the statement made by the Chairman of the Haj Committee, which is a statutory body. The Central Haj Committee is created by an Act of Parliament. As the hon. Member has brougth to my notice some reports in some Saudi Arabian newspapers, I will look into them.

So far as the management of houses is concerned, the hon. Member is aware and the House is aware of the fact that this year also we have increased substantially the number of Haj pilgrims from 31,000 to 56,000 and all necessary arrangements including accommodation, for which a large part of the question was devoted, are well under control and this is being processed.

SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Sir, no doubt you must compliment the Government for increasing the number of Hajis from 32,000 to 56,000 this year because of the demand. On the question of accommodation, there are certain guidelines. Accommodation has to be procured within 850 metres because aged persons would also go. They will not be able to go from Haram Sharief Mosque to their place of accommodation. Now because of this problem there is a doubt in the minds of the Hajis whether they will be able to get accommodation within 850 metres from the Haram. If it is not there, who is responsible for that? They will have to procure 56,000 units for accommodating the Hajis. How many units have been procured so far? According to Press reports only 38,000 units have been procured and still 18,000 units are to be procured. These are all Press reports. Now these things will create a doubt. Though the Chairman of the Haj Committee is a statutory body, the question I posed is how he can go to another countrty and bring down the image of our own country. If he

makes a Press statement in this country, he is well within his rights. But going and washing the dirty linen outside the country is an act which has to be condemned. How can the Mission officials defend themselves outside the country? Who has to defend them? What action does the Government propose to take? That is my question. It is not that since he is a statutory body no action can be taken against him.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, as regards the question whether he has said or not said, I have already said that we don't have any information. As the hon. Member has brought it to our notice, we will look into it. But in regard to accommodation, it is true that all the accommodation need not be available within 800 metres from the holy shrine. The latest information which we have is that it would be possible for us to get accommodation. It may not be all within 800 metres. The indication which we have received is that up to 800 metres the accommodation, which has been booked right now, is 18,800, from 800 metres to 850 metres 5,070 and from 850 metres to 1,000 metres 15,545. While these are the units which have been booked, our officials informed us that they would be in a position to get the requisite numbers. We shall have to keep in view that India is not the only country which is sending Haj pilgrims in a large number. Many other countries are sending their delegations. Everybody is competing with each other to have the rental accommodation within 800 metres to 1,000 metres from the actual holy shrine. In regard to accommodation, the pilgrims health condition, age and other factors will be taken into account so as to see that they get an accommodation which is nearer to the holy shrine and to make it possible for them to have the pilgrimage as comfortable as possible. But at the same time we will have to appreciate that accommodation for all the 56,000 pilgrims may not be available within 800 metres from the holy shrine.

श्री मोहम्मद अफजल उर्फ मीम अफजल: सर, हज कमैटी और इंडियन कौंसिल के दरम्यान जो कुछ भी हुआ सऊदिया में, उसके बारे में तकरीबन सारी बातें चूंकि जानता हूं, हज कमैटी का मेंबर हूं और राज्य सभा की नुमाइंदगी हज कमैटी में करता हूं। वह सब बातें मेरी नजर में हैं और ऑनोरेबिल मेंबर ने भी कुछ सवालात पूछे हैं और मिनिस्टर साहब ने जवाब भी दिया। लेकिन मैं यह समझता हूं कि इस सारे मामले की खराबी की एक बड़ी वजह यह है कि पहले तमाम हाजी शिप से जाया करते थे और पहले जो हज कमेटी का फॉर्मेशन था वह बम्बई को कंसीडर करके उसी अंदाज से उसकी फॉर्मेशन की गई है और उसमें पूरे मुल्क से नुमाइंदगी कम है। एक नया हज एक्ट एक जमाने से हुकूमत के पास पड़ा हुआ है और उसको पास करने के लिए तकरीबन पिछले दो साल से तो मैं जानता हूं कि हर बार जो भी फॉरेन मिनिस्टर रहे, उनसे मैंने कहा और उन्होंने कहा कि इस सत्र में हम उसको पास कर देंगे। मैं मंत्री जी से यह जानना चाहता हूं कि हुकूमत को क्या कुबाहत है, क्या परेशानी है उस नए हज एक्ट को पास करने में जिसके जरिए से हज कमेटी के अंदर पूरे मुल्क की नुमाइंदगी हो और यह शिकायत दूर हो जाए कि एक ही इलाके के ज्यादा लोग इसके अंदर मेम्बर है। इसलिए इसमें कुछ लोगों का डामिनेशन है और कुछ लोग उससे अलग हैं और वह अपनी बातों को रख नहीं पाते हैं। इसलिए मेरा सीधा सवाल यह है कि सरकार बगैर इधर-उधर जाए यह बताए कि वह नया हज एक्ट पार्लियामेंट के इसी सेशन में पास करना चाहती है और अगर उसे पास करने का इरादा रखती है तो किस तारीख को लाएगी और उसको कैसे पास किया जाएगा। यह बहुत अहम मसला है और जैसा ऑनोरेबिल मेम्बर ने बताया कि हज कमेटी और इंडियन कौंसिल के दरम्यान जो टस्सल पिछले दो-तीन साल से चल रही है, सदर साहब, मैं याद दिला दूं कि 1993 में मैंने हज कमेटी से इस्तीफा दे दिया था और यही सब झगड़े हुए थे और इस वक्त मैंने डिमांड की थी कि सरकार इंक्वायरी करे। मुझे नहीं मालूम, और हमारे मिनिस्टर भाटिया साहब जो उसके इंचार्ज है, उन्होंने उसकी इंक्वायरी कराई थी या नहीं कराई थी। अगर कराई थी तो उसकी क्या रिपोर्ट आई है। मुझे तो मालूम नहीं है। लेकिन मैं समझता हूं कि सारे झगड़ों का इलाज यह है कि नए हज एक्ट के तहत कमेटी का नया फॉर्मेशन होना चाहिए। जो पुरानी कमेटी बनी हुई है उससे मुल्क भर के लोगों को और ज्यादातर सूबों को इस बात की शिकायत है कि उनका रिप्रेजेंटेशन नहीं है। इसलिए सरकार नया हज एक्ट कब पास कर रही है, उस पर कैटेगरीकली बात बताए?

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†Transliteration in Arabic Script

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: The hon. Member was correct when he said that the Act was passed in 1959. At that point of time most of the pilgrims were transported by ship and Mumbai was the main place of activity. Therefore, the composition of the Committee was such that it consisted of members mainly representing this area. For example, out of the ten nominated members, three members are from the Indian Parliament—two members from the Lok Sabha and one from the Rajya Sabha; two members are nominees of the Central Government; two members are from the Maharashtra Assembly; two members are from the Greater Mumbai Municipal Corporation and one member is a nominee of the Maharashtra Government. There are six *ex-officio* members and these six members are also from Mumbai. One member is the Mumbai Police Commissioner; one member is from the Mumbai Port Trust, the Chairman; Mumbai Port Health Officer is also a member. The whole activity was mainly confined to Bombay, at present Mumbai. Hence, people from Maharashtra were represented on the Haj Committee. Now, we are working on a comprehensive legislation to replace that Act or rather amend the Act of 1959. The consultation process is going on. I am sorry that it has taken a much longer time than we intended it to. But we have reached the final stages of drafting the legislation. As the hon. Member said, now the Haj pilgrims are coming from different parts of the country and there are different embarkation points. Therefore, the State Haj Committee should also have adequate representation and say in the Central Haj Committee. Keeping that objective in view, we are proposing to amend the Constitution. I have already given some assurances. Those assurances are yet to be fulfilled. I do not know whether it will be possible during this Session, but as soon as possible, we would like to bring an amendment to the 1959 Act... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI MOHAMMED AFZAL *alias* MEEM AFZAL: This 'as soon as possible' has been going on for many, many years. I would like to know what the time criterion of this "as soon as possible" is. "As soon as possible" does not mean four or five years.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: The hon. Member will appreciate, even in a small body of 16 plus 3, that is, 19 members, how many differences of opinion the hon. Members have. He is fully aware of it. He has told me about the complaints. But, unless we come to some definite conclusion, it is not possible for me to make any comment on it. But I will try to expedite the process of legislation.

श्री ओम प्रकाश कोहली: सभापति महोदय, मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से जानना चाहूंगा कि हज यात्रियों की सुविधा के लिए सरकार क्या-क्या व्यवस्था करती है और इन व्यवस्थाओं पर पिछले 3 वर्षों में प्रति वर्ष कितना धन खर्च किया गया है? मेरे प्रश्न का दूसरा भाग यह है कि क्या अन्य धर्म मतों के देश के बाहर स्थित धर्म-स्थानों की यात्राओं के लिए भी सरकार ऐसी ही व्यवस्था करती है और यदि करती है तो उन पर पिछले 3 वर्षों में कितना धन खर्च किया गया है?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, as far as Government expenditure is concerned, I have some figures. The expenditure of the Government in 1995 was Rs. 17.50 crores. In 1994, it was Rs.24.69 crores; in 1993, it was Rs. 26.11 crores and in 1992, it was Rs.14.43 crores. These are the figures of expenditure incurred by the Government in the last four years. Sir, Haj pilgrimages is different from the other types of pilgrimages because, for the past several years, a large number of people have been going there. This type of an event does not take place in any other religion. Therefore, this is not a comparable situation.

श्री ओम प्रकाश कोहली: सभापति महोदय, जैसे अपने सिक्ख बंधु पाकिस्तान में धर्म यात्रा के लिए जाते हैं, बोद्धों के धर्म स्थान अपने देश से बाहर हैं, मेरा प्रश्न यह है कि जो अन्य धर्म मत हैं, उनके देश से बाहर स्थित जो धर्म स्थान हैं, उनकी यात्राओं के लिए सरकार क्या व्यवस्था करती है और यदि नहीं करती तो ऐसी ही व्यवस्था करने का सरकार का इरादा है कि नहीं?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, if the hon. Member indicates any particular pilgrimage, then I can reply. I cannot reply to this omnibus type of a question.

SHRI MD. SALIM: Mr. Chairman, Sir, through you, I would like to know three things from the hon. Minister. He has given figures in respect of the expenditure incurred by the Government of India on account of Haj pilgrimage for the last four years. There is a lot of confusion in this country and a lot of communal propaganda on this basis. My question is whether this expenditure of roughly Rs.14 crores to Rs. 26 crores over the years includes the expenditure of the goodwill mission which is not a part of the religious exercise but a part of the foreign affairs exercise. Does the expenditure incurred by the Government of India also include the expenditure incurred towards sending its officials who accompany the large number of Indians going abroad on the pilgrimage. Thirdly, and most importantly, Mr. Chairman, Sir, the dollar value is going up. Since these pilgrims are going abroad, they have to incur expenditure on dollar basis. Due to the policy of the Government of India, the dollar value has gone up by double the price. So, I would like to know whether the Government is thinking of subsidising it. Because of its own policy, the common man who is going on the pilgrimage has to pay double the price. So, when this money is going to be doubled, I would like to know whether this part also will be taken care of or not.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, so far as the expenditure part is concerned, I can give you the break-up under which the expenditure is taking place. One is the expenditure on the back-up arrangements in terms of withdrawal of the NB Nicobar, when the shipping arrangement was there. Then, we have the operation cost of that ship, the Government expenditure and the Government expenditure on pilgrims travelling by air. All these taken together, it came to the figure, as stated in the break-up given for 1992—95. In addition to that, the Government have certain expenditure on the official delegations whose job is not only to overview the arrangements made there but also, as the hon. Member is aware, to make our viewpoints known because a large number of Islamic countries are represented in this pilgrimage and sometimes the delegations are of a very high political level. Therefore, we considered it necessary that if we send the official delegations to have interaction with them during those days, then it will be possible for us to place our viewpoints before the people on many issues. The expenditure incurred, in this connection, was Rs. 30 lakhs in 1991 and

it went up to Rs. 1.22 crores in 1995. Therefore, it is not much when compared to that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 83.

*83. [*The questioner (Shri Bhagaban Majhi) was absent for answer, vide col. 26 infra*]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 84.

Signing the CTBT

*84. SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:†

SMT. VEENA VERMA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any decision to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty;

(b) if so, which countries have so far indicated their intention to sign the treaty;

(c) whether it is a fact that while signing the treaty some restrictions are likely to be placed on non-nuclear weapon countries and also to legitimise the possession and show of nuclear strength by nuclear weapon countries; and

(d) if so, what is Government's precise stand about signing the Treaty?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d) Negotiations on Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) have been underway at the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva since January 1994. A consensus resolution on Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was adopted by the UN General Assembly in November 1995 which *inter alia,* calls for the conclusion of a CTBT "so as to enable its signature by the outset of the 51st session of the General Assembly". The negotiations have made progress though some important issues are yet to be resolved. India has actively participated in the on-going negotiations and has put forward a number of principled proposals consistent with our policy, both on CTBT and on Nuclear Disarmament. These proposals place the CTBT in the context of the goal of global nuclear disarmament. The decision on signing a CTBT will depend upon the outcome of the negotiations.

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Sushil Kumar Sambhaji Rao Shinde.

SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE: Sir, a single reply was given for all parts, from (a) to (d). But, in part (b), I specifically asked the names of the countries which had so far indicated their intention to sign the treaty. But, it has not been replied to. Sir, the negotiations have made progress, though some important issues are yet to be resolved. I would like to know the issues which have not been solved so far.

Secondly, they say that a number of principled proposals, consistent with our policy, have been submitted. What are those proposals? Sir, we have, from the beginning, before every forum, made the position very clear. A decade back, Shri Rajiv Gandhi, moved the United Nations on 'Nuclear Powers Free World'. The C.T.B.T. is only one step in that direction. While there was some progress in that direction when the big powers agreed to withdraw or destroy stage by stage the nuclear warheads strategically installed by them, this received a serious setback when France and China indulged in a series of nuclear tests. On the other hand, the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty has been extended indefinitely by the vested interests, interested countries. On 26th Febraury, the hon. President of our country, Shri Shankar Dayal Sharmaji had addressed the Joint Session. In his speech, he noted that this indefinite extension of NPT was an obstacle for universal nuclear disarmament. May I know the steps being contemplated by the Government for removal of this obstacle and for paving the way for universal disarmament?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, the negotiations on CTBT are going on at the Conference on Disarmament at Geneva. Therefore, it is not possible to indicate the names of the countries which are going to sign the CTBT unless the current negotiations are concluded. I have pointed out in the text of my reply that the mandate of the United Nations requires the negotiators in the CD Conference to conclude their negotitions before the 51st Session of the United Nations General Assembly which begins sometime in September so that the Treaty could be made available. So far as the present time-frame is concerned, perhaps the negotiations would